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CHRISTIAN DEMONOLOGY.

III.

Evidence of Assyrian Monuments.

It is much to be desired that some scholar, able to decipher for himself the cuneiforms of ancient Assyria and well acquainted with the general history of magic, should write a book in which the outlines of Assyrian beliefs should be clearly and fully traced from the ancient monuments and illustrated from the copious material which the records of later superstition afford. Such a book would show how persistent and how uniform have been, not only the beliefs in evil spirits, but the magical practices and methods of exorcizing them, from the earliest dawn of human civilization in Mesopotamia some 4,000 years B. C. down to the eighteenth century. In Europe and North America we are not wholly emancipated yet from such beliefs; but among the more backward civilizations of India, China, and the Pacific they are still everywhere alive and active. If, then, the phrase *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus* holds true of any body of belief it holds good of these; and the Church possesses no real Catholicity¹, such as is claimed for it, except in so far as there lies imbedded in the New Testament, in the writings of her Fathers and in her rituals, this primitive element of demonological belief and practice.

¹ Cp. Pliny the Elder (*Hist. Nat.* xxx. 4) who, speaking of magic, says: "Adeo ista toto mundo consensere, quamquam discordi et sibi ignoto."

In exploring the ruins of Koyoundjik Sir Henry Layard came on a large subterranean chamber littered to a depth of half a yard with cuneiform tablets. He had found the library of king Assur-bani-pal. But the texts so found did not all belong to so late an epoch as that monarch's, who succeeded only in B. C. 669. Masses of them were in the Sumero-Accadian dialect which preceded the Semitic language in the basin of the Tigris and Euphrates, and which was their sacred language; and these Sumero-Accadian clay books contained also versions in Assyrian of their contents, so that our Assyriologists can translate them for us. Prof. Sayce puts back much of this literature, especially the magical incantations and exorcisms, to about the year 3600 B. C. So remote is the epoch to which we can trace back a faith in evil spirits, in possession by them, in the use of names, identical with that of the New Testament writers.

Assyro-Chaldaean magic, says Babelon¹, rested on the belief that innumerable spirits are dispersed all over nature, directing and animating all created beings. They cause good and evil, guide the heavenly bodies, bring on day after night and night after day, watch over the return of the seasons, cause winds to blow and rain to fall, with snow, hail, and thunderbolts. They too make the land fertile or barren, generate and destroy life, send health or disease and death. They are everywhere—in the heaven of stars, in the bowels of earth, or in the middle regions of the air. Earth, air, fire and water are full of them.

Of these spirits some are good, some bad by nature, and their opposing hosts form a vast dualism embracing the universe. But the Chaldaeans were more concerned with the bad than with the good spirits; and the chief purport of their incantations was to expel the evil from men and introduce good ones in their place. For in Nineveh and Babylon

¹ *Hist. Anc. de l'Orient*, new edition, tom. V, p. 194.

there were no physicians in our sense of the words, but only priests armed with mysterious formulæ in the dead and sacred dialect which the demons alone understood and respected, but of which the common people had no knowledge. Like Origen's demons, those of ancient Assyria liked to be addressed in a sacred language which they understood.

As in Christianity, so in the old Assyrian religion, there was a mediator, Marduk the Merciful, called in the Sumerian dialect Silik-mulu-hi, i. e. he that arranges good for man, reveals to men the wishes and thoughts of Êa, the spirit of heaven. Says Marduk: "I am he that walks before Êa, I cause hymns to be sung unto Êa, I war (with the evil spirits), I am his eldest son, his messenger." Like the Christ, he is "The Son unto whom the Father revealeth all things."

The following piece gives us an idea of the mediatorial activity of Marduk; I extract it from a French work of M. Halévy, *Documents religieux de l'Assyrie et de la Babylonie*, Paris, 1882, p. 54. The particular piece which I select for illustration is entitled a "Magic incantation against Head-ache." It runs thus:—

1.

"Incantation. The (demon) Head-ache runs up from the desert, blowing like the wind. He thunders like the lightning, he skims high and low. He breaks like a twig him who fears not his god. He tears asunder his veins like a castor-bean¹.

"He crushes the flesh of him that has not a protecting goddess. The victim faints and swoons like a star of heaven, vanishes in the night as water.

2.

"He attacks in front mortal man and smites him instantly. He kills that man.

¹ Babelon (p. 203) renders: "Son ulcère l'opprime comme une entrave."

"The man writhes as one whose heart is being torn out. He tosses himself to and fro as one whose heart is taken away. He burns like a thing fallen into a great fire. His eyes are filled with darkness like a wild ass in agony.

"He is consumed in his soul, he clings to the dead.

"The Head-ache is like unto a great storm. None knoweth its path. No one knoweth its whole force, nor how long its assault lasteth¹.

"This the god Maroudouk (lord or master of evil spirits) beholdeth. He betaketh him to his father Ia, enters his abode and saith: 'My father, Head-ache hath taken possession of this man.'

"Then he saith twice:

"'I know not what this man must do, nor by what means he will be healed.'

"Ia answered his son Maroudouk: 'My son, what knowest thou not? What wilt thou I should add unto thee? Maroudouk, what knowest thou not? What wilt thou I should still tell thee? That which I know thou knowest also.

"'Go, my son Maroudouk: gather a herb which grows apart by itself in a desert place. Cover thy head with a handkerchief so soon as the sun shall have entered into his dwelling. Then wrap up in it the herb and shut it up.

"'At dawn of day ere the sun rises, scatter it about in the place where the (sick man) is staying. Take the roots (of the plant), take also the wool of a young and virgin sheep. Wrap up in it the head of the sick man; wrap up in it the neck of the sick man. The Head-ache which dwells in the body of that man will depart at once; like a leaf that the wind carries away, it will not ever return to its place. Remember the oath of heaven. Remember the oath of earth.'"

In the last lines, says Halévy, the demon is exhorted to
Halévy on remember the oath which the demons took,
its import. probably at the time of their creation, to submit

¹ Babelon's version ends here.

to order and not harm any creature. The idea that the order of nature, of well-being, peace, health, rest on an oath of fealty, which from the first the gods imposed on all subordinate beings, and that all disorder and trouble is through their breaking of this oath (or covenant)—this idea was not only Babylonian, but forms the basis of Hebrew religion and of all the system of reward and punishment found in the prophets and psalmists.

The same writer remarks that the Semitic symbolism of bodily and moral purity finds significant expression in the wool of the innocent lamb wrapped round the head of the sinner whom his protecting deities have abandoned to the fury of the demon.

Babelon has some just remarks about the incantation just quoted. When, he says, the demons have Functions of the god to be driven away, the exorcism takes on a Êa and of dramatic character. After a description of the Marduk. ravages caused by the evil spirit, it supposes that Silik-mulu-hi has heard the complaint. But his power and knowledge are not enough to overcome so powerful a demon. So he addresses his father Êa, the divine intelligence which pervades the universe, the master of the eternal secrets, the god who presides over theurgic acts and reveals the mysterious rite, the formula or the all-powerful and hidden name which will break down the most formidable powers of the abyss.

The same author remarks (p. 202) that in delivering a person possessed from the evil demon, it was Good spirits must replace evil ones. usual to introduce into him after its exit a good or holy spirit, as the surest way of preventing the evil spirit from returning.

For want of such a precaution the evil spirit in the Gospels came back along with seven others. In Recurrence of the number seven. the Sumerian formulae the number seven plays a great part. The formulae which make up an incantation are commonly seven in number and must be repeated seven times. The spirits invoked are also seven,

like the seven angels which stood before God in Revelation; and in the magic formulae printed by Prof. Sayce at the end of his *Hibbert Lectures* the demons present themselves time after time in groups of seven. The recurrence of the number seven in the New Testament is noteworthy. There are not only seven evil spirits and seven spirits of God, but seven churches in Asia, seven stars as their angels, seven deacons, seven seals, seven sons of Sceva the Jew seven loaves among five thousand, seven baskets of fragments from their feast, seven husbands in succession of one wife, seven nations in Canaan. We may well suspect as mythical any narrative in which things go by sevens.

Just as St. Paul delivered over unto Satan the blasphemers Hymenaeus and Alexander, so also the old Assyrian sorcerer let loose the demons against his enemies, provoked their possession by demons and sent sickness upon them. He could even compass their death by his drawing of lots and imprecations (Babelon, p. 208). Like Origen's demons those of ancient Assyria had outward forms and were so ugly that if you made an image of them and held it up they would often flee, affrighted at their own image (Babelon, p. 212). Our museums contain specimens of such images. An image of a benevolent demon, especially of Silik-mulu-hi, had the same apotropaic virtue as has to-day a statue of Christ or of the Virgin or the mere representation of the Cross; and Babelon (p. 210) gives a formula for driving out the demon of fever by such a device. Purified and enchanted waters had a similar effect, like the sprinklings or *περιρραντήρια* and baptismal rites of the Greeks, Essenes, Christians and Hindoos.

Prof. Sayce in his *Hibbert Lectures* gives the same account of the Demonology of ancient Assyria as the Assyrian authors already quoted. "All sickness," he says¹, "was ascribed by the Assyrians to demoniacal

Chaldean
form of
Traditio
Satanae.

Chaldean
devils had
outward
form.

Sayce on
Assyrian
Demonology.

¹ *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 310.

possession—the demon had been eaten with the food, or drunk with the water, or breathed in with the air, and until he could be expelled there was no chance of recovery.”

This belief Sayce¹ terms Shamanism and defines Shamanism. it as Animism controlled and regulated by a body of exorcists or medicine-men “who take the place of the priesthood of a higher cult.”

The prevention and cure of disease was the main object of the magical texts and incantations. And very characteristic are the opening words, as rendered by Sayce, of the great collection of Chaldaean magical texts :—

“The evil god, the evil demon, the demon of the field, the demon of the sea, the demon of the tomb, the evil spirit, the dazzling fiend, the evil wind, the assaulting wind which strips off the clothing of the body like an evil demon,—conjure, O spirit of heaven! conjure, O spirit of earth! That which is misformed, that which is diseased, that which is racked (with pain), even a diseased muscle, a swollen muscle, an aching muscle, a broken muscle, an injured muscle,—conjure, O spirit of heaven! conjure, O spirit of earth. . . .

“The painful fever, the virulent fever, the fever which quits not a man, the fever-demon who leaves not (the body), Conjure, O spirit of heaven! conjure, O spirit of earth!”

In these texts, then, we recognize most of the diseases, mental and moral, healed by the name or authority of Christ. There are demons of the tomb, of the field, of the mountain, of the sea and wind, the demon of disused muscle, of broken blood-vessels, of the evil mouth, of the evil tongue, of fever; and as in Luke's Gospel (viii. 27) the possessed had for a long time worn no clothing, so here we read that the demon stripped its unfortunate victim of his clothing².

Its affinity
with the
beliefs of
the N. T.

¹ *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 329.

² A Scotch writer, Mr. Colin Campbell, in his *Critical Studies in St. Luke's*

All these lesser and malignant demons the old Assyrian exorcist drove out in the name of the great cosmogonist spirits, who were essentially beneficent. "The ceremonies," writes Sayce¹ (described in the Assyrian ritual texts), ".... were not so much a communion with the deities of heaven as an attempt to compel them by particular rites and words to relieve the worshipper from trouble, or to bestow upon him some benefit. Divine worship, in short, was a performance rather than an act of devotion, and upon the correctness of the performance depended entirely its efficacy. The mispronunciation of a single word, the omission to tie a knot at the right moment, would invalidate the whole ceremony. The ritual, therefore, was a sort of acted magic."

Assyrian
worship
was acted
magic.

Evidence of Zoroastrianism.

In laying before my reader this evidence I must beg him to excuse its second-hand character. The Parsi sacred books of this faith have survived among the Parsis of India, the sole modern upholders of the Fire-worship which originated in Media many centuries B.C. and spread over Persia some generations before Cyrus. They are written partly in an old Iranian dialect akin both to Vedic Sanscrit and to the old Persian in which Darius dictated his inscriptions of Behistan, and partly in Pehlevi, or the middle Persian used in the third and following centuries of our era. Their evidence is only accessible to me through the translations of Darmesteter, West and Mills, and the works of Dr. Wilhelm Geiger, Franz Spiegel, Madame Ragozin, and others.

According to this religion a division into good and

Gospel, 1891, p. 94, has noticed this and other points of resemblance between the old Assyrian beliefs and the New Testament.

¹ *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 319.

evil runs through the whole universe of things visible and invisible. Ahura Mazda, the ultimately supreme god, heads a phalanx of good spirits, human and superhuman. Against his kingdom of light is arrayed a counter one of darkness and evil, headed by Angra Manyu, the mediaeval Ahriman, prince of the powers of the air and of night. The latter, through his demons, causes death and disease, droughts, and all convulsions of nature. The demons, if male, are called Daiva; if female, Druj. Every good demon is opposed and thwarted by a corresponding bad one; and among the evil ones may be noticed Aishma, the demon of sudden anger, who appears in the book of Tobit as Aeshma Daeva or Asmodeus. There is also Bushyâsta, the demon of sleep. With the demon of anger we have already met in the Shepherd of Hermas, and with that of sleep in the Twelve Testaments.

Persian dualism does not seem to have been absolute in the sense that the counter principles of good and evil were represented as coeval. At any rate Angra Manyu is in some ways posterior to Ahura Mazda. He is not mentioned in the old Persian inscriptions of Darius and Cyrus; and his realm of evil spirits and evil things is later than the kingdom of good, of the blissful and immortal Amesha Spenta. The Zoroastrians believed the whole earth and air to be full of evil spirits, which attacked both men and animals, generally through the baleful enchantment of an apostate or a witch. Yet the demons could be driven out by certain formulae or health-giving sayings, repeated in the right way, as also by various talismans. And the kingdom of darkness was shaken from top to bottom by the appearance on earth of Zarathustra or Zoroaster, the prophet and friend of Ahura Mazda and revealer to men of his light and truth. This prophet's mission was to liberate man from the evil spirits, which possess the waste, dry, and waterless regions of the

Dualism of
old Persian
belief.

The good
spirit was
prior to
the bad.

The saviour
Zoroaster.

earth, and are ever seeking to ruin crops by drought or sowing tares, and so to render the whole land a desert incapable of supporting man. Likewise, as in Luke's Gospel and in the Appendix of Mark, so in the Avesta, all noxious animals and insects, snakes, scorpions, ants, flies, and the wolf—the counterpart and enemy of the domesticated dog—are creations of Angra Manyu or Ahriman and of his demons. Prior to the advent of Zarathustra, Ahriman had also created evil spirits in human form—Drujas, Pairikas, and Daevas; but after Zarathustra had once hallowed the human form by assuming the same, the supreme evil spirit lost his power of creating men-demons; he could thenceforth only injure man by causing in him various deformities. However, man in the exercise of his free will can still so fall from the good as even to become a daeva, especially after death.

For the soul is immortal and good spirits go to Paradise, crossing the bridge Chinvat which spans the wide water into the heaven of light, where Ahura Mazda and his angels welcome them. But the souls of the bad cannot cross the bridge, because evil spirits hinder them and the demon of death drags them down in fetters into hell.

But, as in the New Testament, so in the Avesta, the reign of Angra Manyu does not last for ever. At the final dissolution of things a new earth arises purged of demonic agencies; and in the last Judgment and final triumph of Ahura Mazda and his angels the evil spirits with their leader will be condemned and destroyed for ever.

The Avesta creed is so similar in all its essentials to that of Christianity, that James Darmesteter in his last work tried to cast upon it the suspicion of having been influenced thereby. It is true that the existing recension of the Parsi Scriptures cannot be earlier than the Sassanide revival of Magism in

The crea-
tures of
Angra
Manyu.

Fate of the
soul.

Final
triumph of
good over
evil.

Resemblance
of Zoroastri-
anism to
Christianity.

the third century A. D. Yet their substance is much earlier, and Christianity is itself rather the debtor than the creditor of early Persian religion in all that concerns Demonology. The New Testament belief in evil spirits and in their final suppression by a Messiah contains much that is racy of the Persian soil alone.

Evidence of Folklore in general.

To try to outline the demonological beliefs of Hindoos, of Buddhists, or of the less civilized races which represent to us to-day the primitive man of a remote past is impossible. The material is too vast. All that I shall attempt is to illustrate from them some points in the New Testament.

1. Let us begin with the well-known miracle of Gadara, in which the legion of devils passed into a herd of swine. I have already given examples from classic sources of disease demons being induced to leave a human being by the provision for them of another host. Let me add two instances from savage life out of the many with which folklorists have provided us.

"In the island of Nias (in New Guinea)," writes Mr. Frazer (*Golden Bough*, 1890, Vol. II, p. 160), "when a man is seriously ill, and other remedies have been tried in vain, the sorcerer proceeds to exorcize the devil who is causing the illness. A pole is set up in front of the house, and from the top of the pole a rope of palm leaves is stretched to the roof of the house. Then the sorcerer mounts the roof with a pig, which he kills and allows to roll from the roof to the ground. The devil, anxious to get the pig, lets himself hastily from the roof by the rope of palm leaves; and a good spirit, invoked by the sorcerer, prevents him from climbing up again."

with substitution of
a good spirit.

The idea, of course, is that the evil spirit passes into the

pig out of the sick man; and the substitution of a good spirit for a bad belongs to the same order of ideas as we have already met with in the Latin rite of baptism, except that in the latter the priest blows out the evil one instead of tempting it out with a pig.

Here is another example. In the Western Himalayas the people take a dog, intoxicate him with spirits and bhang or hemp, and having fed him with sweetmeats, lead him round the village and let him loose. They then chase and kill him with sticks and stones; and believe that, when they have done so, no disease or misfortune will visit the village during the year.

In this instance the dog is a scapegoat, which the Gadarene swine, strictly speaking, were not. But the underlying idea is the same, namely, that the evil spirits will go into the newly-provided host and leave the old.

It is not always needful even to provide a living host.

For the demon also admits of being transferred into a rag or a paste of clay laid on the part afflicted and subsequently removed. We have examples of such cures in the New Testament¹, as where Jesus spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle to anoint the eyes of a blind man withal. Similar cures were common in antiquity. In the *Satyricon* of Petronius Arbiter, for example, a writer of Nero's age, a witch makes a cake of clay with her spittle, anoints a young man affected with some weakness on the forehead and instantly cures him².

Frazer, in his *Golden Bough*³, relates how the Incas of Peru banished sickness from their country by rubbing their entire persons with a paste made of maize kneaded with the blood of children. They did this, he says, in order that the paste might take away all their infirmities.

¹ John ix. 6.

² *Satyricon*, ch. 131: "Mox turbatum sputo pulverem medio sustulit digito, frontemque repugnantis signat."

³ Vol. II, p. 167.

A similar cure is related by Tacitus¹ on the faith of Vespasian's informants who witnessed it. In the year 70 A.D. miracle. the Emperor Vespasian was in Alexandria, and one of the natives, notoriously blind, prayed him to cure his blindness by deigning to smear with his spittle his cheeks and eyeballs. For the god Serapis in a dream had bidden him seek this remedy. Vespasian consulted with his advisers and with the medical men, and ended by doing as the blind man besought him to. "Statim . . . caeco reluxit dies," at once the day-star shone once more for the blind man. As a rule the disease preferred to pass out into a medium similar to that from which it was expelled. For example, a cure for tooth-ache was to tie two snakes' teeth to one's neck, upper or lower teeth as the pain was in the upper or lower jaw. A tooth torn from a live mole was also effective as a cure, if bound to the aching jaw².

In the presence of such analogous cures, who will pretend that Jesus did not entertain the same conception of the causes of blindness and other diseases as the Incas of Peru, or the Alexandrians, "dedita superstitionibus gens," as Tacitus calls them in connexion with Vespasian's miracle?

2. In Matt. xii. 44³ the unclean spirit walks through

¹ *Hist.* iv. 81.

² Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xxx. 8. The same author relates that a popular remedy for a cold in the head was to kiss the nostrils of a mule (xxx. 11). Numerous uses of human spittle are recorded by Pliny, e. g. that of a man fasting was a cure for snake bite (*Nat. Hist.* xxviii. 7). You spat in presence of an epileptic by way of rejecting the disease and expelling it from yourself (ibid.). This was why men spat in the presence of St. Paul. We know therefrom that he was an epileptic. Pliny (ibid.) also tells us that you could heal a man's ophthalmia by anointing his eyes with your spittle early in the morning. Bloodshot eyes were healed by the spittle of a fasting woman (ibid. xxviii. 22).

³ What is the bearing on the context of Matt. xii. 43-45? What had Jesus in mind in uttering these words? It has been suggested to me by Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, that some demon which Jesus had cast out had returned and retaken possession of the person from whom it had been expelled. Then Jesus had been taxed with this apparent failure of his exorcistic powers, and these verses 43-45 are his answer to his accusers. In

waterless places, when he is gone out of a man. Finding no rest there, he decides to return into his house from whence he came out; "and when he is come he findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then he takes seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

Canon Gore, anxious to clear the teaching of Jesus Christ with regard to demons from the imputation of containing "Elements of Superstition," declares that in the above passage he is "plainly speaking in metaphor." The "waterless places," he writes, through which the demon walks are as metaphorical as "the empty, swept and garnished house" of the soul (*Dissertations*, i. § 3). If Mr. Gore had been familiar with the demonology of that age and of ages before and after it, he could not have so written. For, in the first place, it is notorious that of old, as still among races that believe in them, the demons inhabited the desert and ruins; and all apotropaic ritual was intended to coax or drive off demons from the fertile and inhabited haunts of man into the desert. Hence the scapegoat was sent into the wilderness; the demoniac in Luke viii. 29 was driven by the evil spirit into the desert, and Asmodeus in the book of Tobias fled, pursued by the angel, into the utmost parts of Egypt, which were desert. Then as to the "house empty, swept and garnished," there is no reason to suppose that by it is meant the man's soul, or rather body, out of which the first devil went forth. For when a man was exorcized, the house he lived in was carefully swept out to make sure that the demon did not continue to lurk in it.

Mr. Frazer (*Golden Bough*, p. 164 foll.) gives many them he lays the blame on the wickedness of that generation. The verses or verse in which his failure was alleged would probably have been erased from the text of the Gospel as being derogatory to the Son of God. No cure of his could be partial or imperfect.

examples of such a custom. Thus the Eskimo of Alaska, when they periodically hunt out the demons from their houses, brush their clothes, violently calling on the spirits to leave them. The Incas of Peru (p. 169) "shook their clothes as if they were shaking off dust, while they cried 'Let the Evils be gone.'" So the ancient Athenians at the close of the feast of Anthesteria, during which the souls of the dead rose up and were fed and walked about the city, swept out their houses, crying *Thuraze kéres*¹, "begone, ye demons," i. e. of death or disease. The Incas washed themselves in running water to get rid of the demons, and the same idea underlies baptism. In most ancient languages to hallow or consecrate was to *cleanse* from impure spirits. On the Gold Coast (Frazer, p. 170) the women wash and scour all their wooden and earthen vessels "to free them from all uncleanness and the devil." Among the Hindus (ibid. p. 176), at the close of the festival of lamps, at which the souls of ancestors are believed to visit the house, the oldest woman of the family takes all the sweepings and rubbish of the family and throws them out, with the words: "Let all dirt and wretchedness depart from here and all good fortune come in." In the Greek islands to this day you must not sweep out a sick man's house, lest you sweep out his soul, and he lose it for good². For sickness is conceived of as the temporary absence of the soul from the body. And this fear of sweeping out the soul of one still living by mistake is met with all over the earth. Now as you are careful not to sweep out a man's soul so you are careful to sweep out demons, which are similar in their composition. Porphyry, we saw, believed that

¹ So Ovid, *Fasti* v. 442, relates how at the close of the Lemuria festival the householders after feeding the shades dismissed them:

"Et rogat ut tectis exeat umbra suis.

Quum dixit novies: Manes exite paterni."

On the whole subject see Rohde, *Psyche*, ed. 1890, p. 219; and Tylor, *Prim. Cult.* ii. 181, 182.

² I owe this detail to Mr. W. R. Paton.

houses are full of demons, which must be driven out of a room or a building before it is used for worship; and Eusebius quoted his opinion on this as on other points with approval. The consecration of a church or burial-ground reposes on such a belief.

Thus the probable meaning of Matthew's text becomes clear. It may actually have been the man's house which was swept and garnished, and not his person or body at all. After expelling the demon from a man's body you would also sweep his house out to make quite sure that the spirit was gone. Having lived in the man, the spirit had also tenanted his house, which he therefore speaks of as his own. And he returns to haunt it, much to the inconvenience and distress of its human proprietor. Yet it may be true that the term house (*οἶκος*) really means the man himself in this passage; just as in Rom. viii. 11 Paul speaks of the Spirit as making his house (*ἐνοικοῦν*) in our mortal bodies (cp. 2 Cor. vi. 16). But even if this be so, we must still see in such phraseology a reference to the superstitious habit of purifying a bewitched house to get rid of demons. And there is no reason for supposing that Jesus did not believe in the language of current demonology which he here as everywhere else employs. It is a hopeless task to try to pick and choose in the New Testament, to accept all we can take literally and then to coolly explain away the rest.

3. It will startle many orthodox persons to be told that Storm-
demons Jesus Christ believed the winds and waves to be evil demons. That it should be so is only a proof of the extent to which rationalism has eaten into the heart of their religion; at the same time it proves the emptiness of the orthodox commentators on the Gospels, to understand which we must become, if not as little children, at least sympathetic with the simple-minded orientals who wrote them and for whom they were written.

In Mark iv. 39 we read, in the account of the stilling

of the storm, that Jesus "awoke and rebuked the wind, and ^{in the} said unto the sea, 'Peace, be still.' And the ^{Gospels.} wind ceased, and there was a great calm." But here the Revised Version, which we quote, seems of set purpose to have blurred the sense of the Greek text, which really means the following: "he rebuked the wind and said unto the sea, Be silent, be muzzled. And the wind grew weary," &c. Here the entire phraseology is demonological. "He rebuked" (*epetimā*) is the regular word used to describe Jesus' way of addressing evil spirits. It is not a very common word in the New Testament, yet in five other cases it is so used, not reckoning the parallel narratives to this of Matthew and Luke, who both use it. Then come the words, "Be silent, be muzzled" (*pephimōso*). Mark uses the latter word but once elsewhere, in i. 25, where we read that Jesus rebuked (*epetimēsen*) the unclean spirit, saying, Be muzzled (*phimōthēti*), and go forth out of him. There can be no question in what light Mark regarded the incident, and Matthew and Luke by using the same word "rebuked" also assent to this interpretation of it. Nor are there wanting those among the early fathers who took the passage in such a sense. Ephrem Syrus, though he wrote in the fourth century, ^{Ephrem Syrus believed in them.} more than any other father of that age reflects the tone of Palestine in the first and second centuries, probably because he was a Syrian and not a Greek. In his Commentary on the Diatessaron he thus writes about the incident: "What authority, what benevolence is here displayed by Jesus! For see here, it submits through his force. That our Lord silenced these (elements) that were not his own—namely, the winds of the sea and those devils withal—thereby he showed that he is son of the Creator." Ephrem, then, regarded the winds and waves as having been demons and alien to Jesus. And so did the Apostles who marvelled that the wind and sea *obeyed* him. The word *hupakouō*, here translated "obey," is in all the three Synoptics, and Mark only uses it once

elsewhere (i. 27), and then of unclean spirits submitting to Jesus.

Here, then, we have most fully illustrated in the Gospels that primitive animism which invests the elements with life and turns winds and waves into demonic agencies.

Kindred So the Assyrians had their wind- and tempest-beliefs of Old demons; and Babelon¹ figures an image of the Assyrians, demon of the South-West wind preserved in the Louvre. It is a horrible demon, erect, with lion's claws, a scorpion's tail, wings of an eagle, and body of a dog; while the head is a dead skull with the flesh half torn off, with goat's horns over the eyes. At the top of the head is a ring by which it was hung up at a door or window to scare away by its own ugliness the very demon which it represented.

So the ancient Persians also had their wind-demons, and of Persians, Origen, as we saw above, expressly sets down Latins, and to their malice the storms which wrecked Arabs, mariners. The Romans had their wind-god, Aeolus, to whom they raised altars even as they did to Πυρερός, the fever-demon. Herodotus² relates how in the land of the Psylli, the modern Tripoli, the Simoom had dried up the water-tanks. Whereupon the people took counsel and marched in a body to make war on the South wind. Mr. Frazer, to whose work on the *Golden Bough* I owe this reference, gives many similar cases. The Bedouins of East Africa stab with drawn creeses the centre of a dust-storm as it sweeps across the path, in order to drive away the evil spirit that is believed to be riding on the blast. When the Eskimos want a calm and of Eskimos, respite from North-Westerly winds, they light a fire, chant and invite the demon of the wind to come under the fire and warm himself. As soon as he arrives

¹ *Hist. Anc.*, ed. 1887, p. 213.

² iv. 173; Aul. Gell. xvi. 11. Xenophon (*Anab.* iv) relates how he and his soldiers appeased the fury of Boreas on the Armenian uplands by sacrificing a victim thereto.

they throw water on the fire to extinguish it, and shoot arrows into the spot where it burned and where the demon is supposed to be still sitting. We find similar beliefs all over the world, and even to-day winds are sold by old women in Lerwick in North Britain just as they are in Mediterranean ports. In old Christian art we meet with the same belief. For example, in the Taylor Gallery in Oxford an old Italian picture (No. 15) depicts the rescue of a storm-tossed ship and crew by Nicholas of Myra, who comes flying through the sky in response to the mariner's prayer; while the storm-demon, not unlike a nereid, makes off through the waves at his approach¹.

4. I have already referred to the descent of the Holy Spirit as a dove. In Luke's Gospel it is in the Hebrew Gospel it not merely alighted on, but entered into, Jesus. Of course the theosophy of the Alexandrine Jews which chose the dove as symbol of the Divine Spirit had its part in the generation of this the central incident in the life of Jesus. Thus Philo compares the Human Reason and the Divine Word respectively to the domestic pigeon and the turtle-dove². "For," says he, "the Word of God is fond of the desert and of solitude, not mixing with the throng of things which come to be and pass, but accustomed to roam and soar aloft." And elsewhere he says that "it is the property of the Divine Knowledge or Wisdom to roam aloft, like a bird; wherefore it was," he says, "symbolically called a turtle-dove³."

But underneath this comparison, already common among Greek Jews in Philo's day, there lay the popular belief that the soul or reason or spirit of man is winged like a bird; for, as Tertullian says, every spirit, good and bad alike, had wings. We saw above how according

¹ See Mrs. Jameson's *Legendary Art*, vol. II, p. 72.

² Philo, ed. Mangey, i. p. 590.

³ Ibid. p. 506.

to the Pseudo-Pionius¹ a dove visited Polycarp preparatory to his consecration², and how in the hour of his martyrdom his soul or spirit left his body as a dove. In strict accordance with such ideas, the Holy or Divine Spirit rested or,

The dove according to one account, entered into Jesus at
 was the his baptism as a dove, replacing his merely
 divine soul human soul. And this explains why in the
 entering earliest texts of the Gospels a voice was heard
 into Jesus.

from heaven on this occasion to say: "Thou art my beloved Son, this day have I *begotten* thee;" that is to say, "this day have I communicated to thee my spirit, soul or life." And immediately after the baptism Jesus, we read, was full of the Holy Ghost—as he had not been before—and was led thereby into the wilderness. Such was the earliest form of the story of the Baptism of Jesus. But in a later age, when the belief in the virgin birth and conception by the Holy Ghost had grown up, it became necessary to represent the Divine Soul or Spirit as having been in Jesus from birth. With this newer view the text "This day have I begotten thee" was not compatible; so it was changed in all copies of the New Testament into the words, "with thee am I well pleased."

Now this idea of a soul entering or leaving the body in the form of a bird is widespread. In the
 Other exam-
 ples of such
 a belief: *Odyssey* (xi. 222)³ we read how at death the soul
 of a hero fluttered up like a bird and flew away. So in Plato's *Phaedrus* (p. 249) the soul has wings and feathers with which she soars upwards to the ruler of
 among Old the universe. And to the ancient Greek such
 Greeks, language was no metaphor, but expressed a serious belief. Mr. Frazer⁴ draws our attention to many

¹ See Lightfoot's *Apostolic Fathers*, vol. I, p. 644, and vol. III, p. 390.

² Faustus, an Armenian author of the fourth century, relates the same story of the consecration of the patriarch Nerses.

³ Ψυχὴ δ' . . . ἀποπταμένη πεπύθηται. The same belief comes in the *Iliad* xvi. 856, and xxii. 362.

⁴ Vol. I, ch. ii. p. 124.

parallels in savage beliefs. When the Malays see a soul on among the wing in bird form they scatter rice to lure Malays, it back. In Java the first time an infant is set on the ground it is put in a hen-coop and the mother makes a clucking sound like a hen to keep the infant soul from straying. In the Celebes, a bridegroom's soul is apt to fly away at marriage, so coloured rice is scattered over him to induce it to stay, for it is imagined to be like a bird.

In Celtic mythology, says Mr. Whitley Stokes¹, good among an- souls appear as white birds; e.g. in the middle cients Celts. Irish *Dá bron flatha nime* (Two sorrows of Heaven's kingdom), "Lebor na huidre," p. 17, and in the *Vision of Adamnan*, *ibid.* p. 31 b, the souls of the righteous come "in shape of pure white birds" to be taught by Eli under the tree of life. The souls of Mael Suthani's three pupils come to him "in shapes of three white doves" (O'Curry, *Lectures* 530). The souls of the wicked appear as ravens (Vita S. Paterni, Rees, *Cambro-British Saints*, Landov. 1853, p. 92). In Jacob Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie*, Vierte Ausgabe, Bd. ii, p. 690, and Bd. iii, p. 246, are several examples from Old German, Bohemian, Polish, Arab, and other mythologies, of the soul appearing as a bird, especially as a dove. Hesychius gives the definition $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$ καὶ ζῴῳφιον πτηνόν, i.e. the soul is a spirit and a little living thing with wings. Grimm (l. c.) gives an old Spanish

Other example of the soul being regarded as a butterfly examples. from a Roman tombstone: "M. Porcius M. haeredibus mando etiam cinere ut meo *volitet* ebrius *papilio*. Among the ancient Greeks the belief was so universal that Demosthenes, c. 50, says of the soul of a departed friend simply ἀπέπτη, "it flew away." In the old Egyptian mythology the sparrow-hawk with a human head repre-

¹ In *Revue Celtique*, tom. II, p. 200. Cp. also Prof. Rhys, *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 240, 398-99. This writer also refers me to Wood Martin's *Pagan Ireland*, pp. 140, 141, for examples of human souls appearing as swans and butterflies.

sents the soul (Bunsen, *Dingbilder* 126). The Romans had the custom of letting fly an eagle from the funeral pyres of their emperors, probably to provide the kingly soul with a vehicle wherein to ascend to heaven. So Professor Rhys (l. c.) gives examples from old Celtic mythology of the conversion of souls into eagles.

5. I will take two more examples of the way in which the New Testament admits of illustration from popular superstitions. In Matt. xiii. 25 we read in the parable of how a man sowed good seed in his field. But while men slept his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. This parable must have appealed with twofold force to an audience that really believed the tares among their crops to be sown by night by evil spirits. In the old Persian religion the powers of darkness, which work by night and flee from the first rays of dawn and from the song of the chanticleer, sowed tares and weeds. And Mr. Frazer in his *Golden Bough* devotes many pages to the enumeration of spring and harvest customs, of which the object was to induce the spirits to furnish man with good crops and to deter the evil spirits from doing them harm.

6. In Matt. xvii. 20 Jesus reproves his disciples for the want of faith which prevented them from casting out the evil spirit from the epileptic boy, and he added these notable words: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." And in Luke xvii. 6 the logion takes this form: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye would say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou rooted up, and be thou planted in the sea; and it would have obeyed you." May not Jesus have held such language in view of the popular, and in that age almost universal, belief that by use of certain incantations and powerful names trees could be brought down off the mountain, hills removed, and even

Devils as
sowers of
tares.

Removal of
trees and
mountains
by faith or
magic.

the moon drawn down to earth? Thus Vergil writes in his eighth *Bucolic* :

Incipe Maenalios mecum, mea tibia, versus.
Omnia vel medium fiant mare.

And again :

Carmina vel caelo possunt deducere Lunam.

So Ovid, *Metam.* xiv. 340, tells how the wife of Picus called Canens could move trees and rocks with her incantations, "*Silvas et saxa movere.*" Medea was believed to have done all this and to have enchained the torrent as well :

Illa refrenat aquas, obliquaque flumina sistit,
Illa loco silvas, vivaque saxa movet.

Petronius Arbiter¹ in graceful verse has enumerated all the miracles which a witch could work :

Quidquid in orbe vides, paret mihi. Florida tellus
Cum volo siccatis arescit languida succis . . .
Mihi pontus inertes
Submittit fluctus, Zephyrique tacentia ponunt
Ante meos sua flabra pedes.

Seneca in his play "*Medea*"² attributes to his heroine similar miraculous powers. Everything obeys her incantations. In Claudian the witch says : "*Ire vagas quercus, et flumina stare coegi*"³.

Fruit trees and crops also could be withered and destroyed by magic incantations, as Tibullus says (*lib. i, Eleg. 8, 19*) :

Cantus vicinis fruges traducit ab agris.

And at Rome it was a provision of the XII Tables⁴ "*ne quis fructus excantassit,*" that no one by charms should ruin another's fruit-crop. The influence of the evil eye, *fascinatio* as it was termed, prejudiced human beings, animals, and plants. In this wise Jesus cursed and so withered the fig-tree.

¹ Ch. 134.

² l. 752 foll.

³ Lib. i. in *Rufin.*

⁴ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xxviii. 4. He also was condemned "*qui malum earum excantassit.*"

Nor must we think that these beliefs were the fancies of poets. The fathers of the Church with one Such beliefs in power of magic seriously held. accord believed that the magi or magicians by use of incantations and invocation of devils could work such miracles, nor would Lucian have ridiculed them so keenly had they not been objects of popular credulity. Nor is it so long since such things were believed in Europe; and a learned Jesuit, Martin Delrio, as late as 1600 in his *Disquisitionum Magicarum libri sex*, after citing the above passages from the Latin poets, gravely argues that they were no exaggeration of what witches and magicians with the help of the devil could do.

We shall be much in error if we suppose that a Syrian or Palestinian city in the age of Christ contained fewer credulous people for its size than did Cologne, where in the seventeenth century the disquisition of Martin was printed and read. It is evident to any one who compares the Jesus as arch-magician. leading marvels of the Gospels—the turning of water into wine, the walking on the sea, the withering of the fig-tree, the stilling of the storm, the feeding of the 5000, the raising of Lazarus and others—that it was the fixed aim of the earliest biographers of Jesus not only to prove that he fulfilled the predictions of the prophets and was therefore the promised Messiah, but equally to put him into successful competition with the leading popular magicians of the age. At his birth the magi came from the East to do homage, and when he grew up he had to excel them all in their own peculiar skill. He had to distance them on their own ground. Doubtless many devout minds in the present age would rather that this thaumaturgic element were not in the Gospels, and feel rightly that it impairs the true isolation and dignity of the central figure. However, we must be thankful for them as they are, and congratulate ourselves that in a document emanating from Syria in the first century the miracles are not more numerous and more striking than they are. It

was indeed very creditable to the Jews of Jerusalem at the time of the crucifixion, that they mostly refused to listen to the tale of the bodily resurrection. For it was a credulous age in which Herod's first thought was that Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead, and in which even the Roman legions had to be set in motion in order to put down the insurrection of a sham Nero who equally with Jesus had risen from the dead, and was acclaimed as having done so by millions of Syrians. Resurrection in that last half of the first century was in the air; and the wonder is not that so many, but that so few believed from the first in the risen Christ.

7. One other point may be noticed, and that is the use in the Gospels of a phrase, borrowed directly from contemporary magic, namely "binding and loosing." Jesus said to Peter: "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven¹." And a little later², he grants this power to the whole body of his disciples.

By incantations the ancient magicians or witches bound the elements, bound the feelings and wills of men, controlled their actions and movements, inflicted on them disease and even death. *Ligare* and *defigere* are the Latin equivalents. Thus the nurse in Seneca's play *Hercules Oetaeus*, l. 453, says: "Artibus magicis fere (? vaga) Coniugia nuptae precibus admistis ligant." And the same author (l. 6, *De Benef.* c. 35) has the phrase "caput alicuius dira imprecatione defigere." So Vergil in the *Ciris*, v. 377:

Regis Iolchiacis animum defigere votis.

Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xxviii. 19 relates that the vestal virgins could by their prayers prevent a fugitive slave from quitting the city. By use of charms earthenware pots could

¹ Matt. xvi. 19.

² Matt. xviii. 18.

be broken¹. Snakes, he says, would yield to the same influence, and houses could be burned down by incantations scrawled on their walls (*incendiorum deprecationibus*). In later Greek the Gospel word *δέω*, "I bind," regularly means "to enchant"; and Diodorus Siculus, lib. i. p. 23, preserves this inscription of Isis: "I am Isis, queen of all the land, and brought up by Hermes; and whatsoever I shall *bind*, no one is able to *loose*." And Aristides, in his oration for Bacchus, p. 53, says that "nothing can be so firmly *bound*, either by disease or anger or any fortune, as that Dionysus cannot loose it." This recalls Luke's phrase used of the woman who had a spirit of infirmity². Satan had *bound* her for eighteen years. Symbolic knots were often used, especially in disease. Prof. Sayce points out in his *Hibbert Lectures* what importance attached to the tying and untying of these. Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* lib. xxviii) mentions a symbolic binding of the sick with linen. Witches, says Ovid³, and old women used magic knots in order to silence wicked tongues. In Somersetshire the peasants still tie symbolic knots on the back of a sick animal; and in the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford such a knot recently used is exhibited. Agabus the prophet, in Acts xxi. 11, in binding his hands and feet seems to have mystically compelled the fulfilment of his peculiar prophecy.

But I need not multiply instances. The words "bind and loose" signify any kind of occult influence gained by the use of the names of gods and demons, by spells sung, as Pliny remarks, in the ritual way without transposition or omission of a single word, amidst the reverential silence of the bystanders, and to the sound of a flute played without intermission, lest anything else but the words of the charm be heard by the supernatural powers⁴. We

¹ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xxviii. 4, "Nondum egressa urbe mancipia fugitiva retinere in loco precatone."

² Luke xiii. 16.

³ *Fasti*, ii. 575, 581.

⁴ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xxviii. 3.

can hardly doubt that the choice of the phrase "binding and loosing" to describe the power conferred by Jesus was suggested by these magic arts. The association with the magic use of the name—which I sha'll presently discuss—at least suggests that the power itself as originally conceived was simply of a theurgic or magical kind.

(To be concluded.)

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